THE

SPEECHES

OF THE

Right Hon. C. J. FOX,

IN THE

BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON FEB. FIRST AND TWELFTH, M,DCC,XCIII.

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SPEECH

OF THE

RIGHT HON. CHARLES J. FOX

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

FEBRUARY 1, 1793.

MR. FOX ſaid, that though ſome words which had fallen from Mr. Pitt in the concluſion of his ſpeech led him to ſuppoſe the queſtion not to be of ſuch very great importance as ſome had conceived; yet ſtill it implicated enough of importance; ſtill it poſſeſſed a ſufficient degree of relation to the ſubject of Peace or War, to make it neceſſary for him to trouble the Houſe at ſome length. Never had he known a period in which the duties of his ſtation bound every man more ſtrongly to deliver his ſentiments openly and firmly. The manner in which the debates had been recently conducted, and the miſrepreſentation which had been made of the ſentiments of thoſe Gentlemen who differed in opinion with Adminiſtration, only tended to prove that the ſervice in which he was employed, was a ſervice of honour as well as of danger; and entertaining theſe ſentiments, he would conceive that he ſhrunk from his duty to his Conſtituents, and to the people at large,

if the cries and calumnies, whiſpered with ſuch aſtoniſhing eagerneſs, and believed with incredible credulity, were to deter him from deprecating a war with France as the greateſt calamity in which this nation could be involved. The buſineſs of the day had been ably introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in a manner conformable to his expectation. Much acuteneſs of obſervation had been employed on the conduct of France, on her follies and abſurdities; but the Right Honourable Gentleman had not been quite ſo accurate in the ſubſequent part of his ſpeech, and in thoſe arguments which he had adduced as grounds for a war, not to mention an armament. The crimes, the murders, and the maſſacres that had been committed in France, he did not view with leſs horror, he did not conſider as leſs atrocious, than thoſe who made them the perpetual theme of their declamation, although he put them entirely out of the queſtion in the preſent debate. The death of the French King, he conceived to be an event as diſgraceful as the page of hiſtory could furniſh; and though in converſation he had held this language, that the puniſhment of Kings was ſometimes a meritorious deed, yet he deſired not to be underſtood to feel leſs abhorrence of the inhuman and unjuſt execution of the unfortunate King of the French—inhuman, inaſmuch as he was put to death without a cauſe—inhuman, inaſmuch as the French had evinced, in their conduct, a total want of that magnanimity,

nanimity, which, much as he admired Monarchy, he ſtill conceived to form a component part of the republican character; it was unjuſt, becauſe the rigid rules of juſtice ought never to bend to convenience. The King was inveſted with an impunity that was not the conſequence of inviolability, for the law had declared the ſpecific abdication for thoſe very crimes which he was alledged to have committed. Notwithſtanding all this, he owned that he did not ſee the propriety of the Parliament of Great Britain expreſſing any opinion on this public act, unleſs it was to be alledged as a ground affecting this country. The general maxim of policy always was, that the crimes perpetrated in one independent State were not cognizable by another. Need he remind the Houſe of our former conduct in this reſpect! Had we not treated, had we not formed alliances with Portugal and with Spain, at the very time when theſe kingdoms were diſgraced and polluted by the moſt ſhocking and barbarous acts of ſuperſtition and cruelty, of racks, torture, and burnings, under the abominable tyranny of the inquiſition? Did we ever make theſe outrages againſt reaſon and humanity a pretext for war? Did we ever enquire how the Princes with whom we had relative intereſts either obtained or exerciſed their power? Why then were the enormities of the French in their own country held up as a cauſe of war? Much of theſe enormities had been attributed to the attack of the combined powers; but this he

neither conſidered as an excuſe, nor would argue as paliation. If they dreaded, or had felt an attack, to retaliate on their fellow citizens, however much ſuſpected, was a proceeding which juſtice diſclaimed; and he had flattered himſelf, that when men were diſclaiming old, and profeſſing to adopt new principles, thoſe of perſecution and revenge would be the firſt that they would diſcard. No man felt greater horror at the proceedings of the combined powers than he did. A confederacy more dangerous never exiſted in Europe. The treaty of Pilnitz contained a ſtipulation that, whenever a fit occaſion offered, ſuch powers were to invade France. Let this country place herſelf in the ſituation of France, and then decide upon her conduct. The treaty, therefore, was the act of aggreſſion. But with regard to the King of Pruſſia, could any doubt be entertained of his being the aggreſſor? What had he to do with France? What right had he to interfere in her Government? The fact was, that the combined Powers ſaw certain principles in the French ſyſtem of Legiſlation which they diſliked. They had the audacity to have recourſe to arms for the purpoſe of moulding her to their will, and of eſtabliſhing the old ſyſtem of deſpotiſm. Should ſuch an event happen as in former times occaſioned the people of Great Britain to interfere in the Government of their Kings, certainly other Monarchs of Europe would be exaſperated at the conduct of the people, but would it be borne, that ſuch Mo-

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narchs ſhould form a confederacy, and invade the country? Undoubtedly not. It was not his intention to travel again over theſe Manifeſtoes that were ſo infamous and deteſtable, that he believed not more than *one perſon* in the Houſe would be found to defend them, but he adverted to them for the purpoſe of noticing an aſſertion, that they were not meant to be executed.—If that could operate as an excuſe for them, he certainly could feel no inclination to check the effect of it. But as the conduct of the French in Brabant had been ſo much reprobated, it would be well to conſider whether the conduct of the Duke of Brunſwick in France was not equally entitled to reprobation. The Duke did not, he allowed, adopt the ſame mode of conduct as the French in Brabant. He did not confiſcate property. He paid for every article which he bought in France, but in this manner: He forced the poor inhabitants to receive bills drawn on, and payable by the French Government, when it ſhould attain its old form. In a ſwindling manner, he gave a receipt in the name of the French King at the very period when he retreated from France, and left the government of France in the ſame ſituation he found it. This mode, if not worſe, was certainly every bit as bad as the conduct of the French in Brabant. At that time, however, Great Britain did not think proper to interfere; but, as ſoon as the combined armies had failed of attaining their object, the adminiſtration endeavoured to inflame the paſ-

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ſions of men by adverting to that conduct adopted by the French, which when purſued by the Duke had not occaſioned in their minds, the ſlighteſt ſentiments of anger. The probable grounds of the war in which the country was about to enter were three. *1ſt.* The conduct of the French as far as it related to aggreſſors in Holland. *2d.* The decree paſſed by the National Convention on the 19th of November. And *3d.* The general ſafety of Europe. On the firſt ground, the Miniſter had acted in his uſual manner; he had not contended that Holland actually required Great Britain to go to war: till ſuch ſpecific requiſitions therefore were made, we were not bound to enter into a war. The Miniſter, however, had aſſerted that the country was bound by good faith and by treaty. If that was true, why was Holland ſo backward in demanding the performance of this obligation. Her not demanding it, plainly proved that Great Britain was not bound by honour, perhaps the only ſolid ground on which any war could be entered into. With regard to the ſentiments of the Dutch on the opening of the Scheldt, a paper alluded to by Mr. Whitbread was of material importance. In that paper, for the obſervance of a Fort, the Dutch ſay, "It is true that a large army ſurrounds us; but the neutrality we have hitherto obſerved has ſaved us from any moleſtation by that army."—Hence his own opinion, declared on the firſt day of the Seſſion, received additional ſtrength and energy. But it might

might be ſaid, that the French had broken their faith with the Dutch. That neither could be, nor ever had been a reaſon for Great Britain going to war with France. But according to the language of the Miniſter, this country was not bound by the letter, but by the ſpirit of the treaty. In his own opinion, however, the ſpirit led quite a contrary way. By the treaty, Great Britain had engaged to defend Holland from peril, not to lead her into it—to avenge real, not imaginary inſults offered to her. The ſecond ground of war was, the decree of the 19th of November. That decree he certainly conſidered as no ſmall inſult on the rights of all neutral nations. An explanation of it had been given, proving that the French meant not to carry it into operation in an objectionable way. This certainly evinced a deſire on the part of France for the continuance of peace, and though the explanation might be unſatisfactory, in ſo much as it contradicted the true meaning of the decree, yet the degradation alone attached itſelf to theſe; from them this contradiction proceeded. The conduct of Adminiſtration towards France had evinced a degree of haughtineſs unexampled. Inſults were complained of, but not ſpecified, ſecurity demanded, but the nature of ſecurity not defined. For his own part, he was afraid that the meaning of the term, on the part of Adminiſtration, implicated a mode of conduct that would totally preclude France from being able to afford any ſatisfaction. For, had

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Adminiſtration mentioned any ſpecific object? No. Had a requiſition been made to withdraw the French troops from Brabant? No. Such a demeanour would have been as much as to ſay, that Great Britain would ſtill preſerve her neutrality, but France muſt withdraw her troops, and ſuffer thoſe of the Emperor to act at pleaſure. But France had declared that ſhe would evacuate Brabant, not however in a ſatisfactory way, for ſhe had declared that ſhe would not evacuate it till the Belgic Liberty had been conſolidated. What her ideas of liberty might be were not definable, but ſtill ſhe evinced a deſire for peace with Great Britain, by doing that which it was not uſual for any nation to do to other nations with whom ſhe was not at war. Great Britain acted like the byſtander, who, aſſuring two men about to fight that he was neutral, ſhould yet declare that he would knock him down who ſhould ſtrike the firſt blow. Whether the poſſeſſion of Brabant by the French was improper, was an abſtract queſtion; but if it were improper, Adminiſtration ought to have proceeded in another way. They ought to have given France early notice of their intentions; they ought to have rendered it poſſible for her to have conſidered that notice, and to have returned a matured anſwer. Adminiſtration, however, did nothing of this—they had received propoſitions.—They had ſaid, that this was an inſult, and that an inſult; they had promulgated their anger, without ſtating in which manner that anger could be appeaſed.

appeaſed. They had violated this incontrovertible axiom in politics, that that war muſt be unjuſt which ſhould be entered into without a previous explanation of the mode that would have tended to avert it. If ſuch a mode of conduct, however, was impolitic, as far as it related to the French, what was it to the people of England.—They were to be driven into a war without knowing the ſpecific object; they did not know whether the object might be to procure the retreat of the French from Brabant, and whether that object could not be obtained without a war. But it had been ſaid, that ſecurity ought to be had againſt the propagation of French principles. What ſecurity? The French, perhaps, might be induced to retire from Brabant, which they had conquered from an invading foe; but would they ſuffer the operations of the mind to be fettered and enchained? The queſtion of ſecurity naturally led him to the probable ground of war, the general ſafety of Europe, which was certainly an object of importance, to which however the preſent Miniſter had been extremely inattentive. He had viewed with ſcandalous inattention the ſubjugation of Poland; he had evinced ſuch inactivity and careleſſneſs with reſpect to the invaſion of France, that it would be difficult for him to recover any energy on the ſubject. If the States of Europe depended on certain ſtipulations, he ought firſt to have attempted the attainment of them without a war. He had now three points, none of which

afforded

afforded any cauſe for war. What then remained but this which had never been avowed, but which ſeemed ever preſent to the imaginations of the ſupporters of a war? The internal government of France. Any interference in her internal government had always been diſallowed, yet alway commented upon at large. From the mode of arguing adopted in the Houſe, Mr. Fox was confident, when any ſubject was touched upon in the diſcuſſion of a war, it was meant to operate in aid of ſuch a war. The internal government of France was the object of the invaſion by the combined armies. What then was the country to be driven to at laſt, but to this moſt unjuſtifiable conduct, to attempt to procure, in a circuitous manner, the reſtoration of the old deſpotiſm of France, which the combined armies had attempted in a more open and avowed way. If this was the real cauſe of war, he had no doubt but that, in a ſhort ſpace of time, it would receive the general execration and abhorrence of the whole world, inaſmuch as it had tended to bind the mind again with theſe fetters which it had thrown off. In this period of miſrepreſentation, he had no doubt that, in ſtating his deteſtation of the ancient deſpotiſm of France, he ſhould be ſaid to approve of the preſent form of government in France. Such miſrepreſentations, however, he diſregarded. He had before ſaid, that adminiſtration had ſuggeſted a cauſe for war, which was only the apparent, not the real one. They thereby purſued

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the example of the French, who profeſſed a moderation at their entrance into the Netherlands, which their ſubſequent conduct totally belied. On the ground, however, of meddling with the States of Brabant, he did not know, as in the old ſtory of the woman taken in adultery, which nation ought to caſt the firſt ſtone. Certainly not the Courts of Berlin and London. For the purpoſe of influencing the minds of the people, a noble Lord had talked much of the former Freedom of the Brabanters. They had, he ſaid, their *pacta conventa*—the conceſſions of freedom of their monarchs, and other privileges.—Did the Emperors Joſeph, Leopold, or Francis, give them freedom? No; the fact was, that the *joyeuſe entrée* was the grand charter of Brabant, and when Dumourier entered Bruſſels, at the Poſtern Gate ran away the Court of Bruſſels. When they had got a few miles from the city, they ſent word to the inhabitants, that they freely gave them the *joyeuſe entrée*, and this was the conceſſion of Liberty granted by the Brabanters to their Sovereign. In all coſiderations of a war, the probable gain and loſs were objects of diſcuſſion. What could this country gain? Extenſion of territory was not intended. Indeed it was not a deſirable object. What could this country loſe? And here he begged not to be underſtood to be alarmed at the threat of the Miniſter of the French Marine. But with reſpect to the Allies of Great Britain, could any one ſay that the Republic and the Stadtholder would not be

affected in a way which he was not bold enough to mention. The ſituation of Ireland was properly an object of conſideration; ſome applauſe had been given to Lord Wycombe, when he ſeemed to expreſs himſelf with delicacy on that ſubject. For his own part, however, he did not approve of that conduct which tended to ſhut the eyes to what formed a neceſſary part of the diſcuſſion. In Ireland, Adminiſtration had done every thing in their power to bring themſelves into diſrepute.—They wanted, indeed, the aſſiſtance of a Gentleman (Mr. Wyndham) who had once condeſcended to accept the office of Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. They had employed their leiſure in ſtirring up the Proteſtants againſt the Catholics, and they had reduced the country to ſuch a ſituation, that conceſſion was now to be deemed wiſdom. At home, he believed the People to be firmly attached to the Conſtitution.—They were attached to it from prejudice and reaſon, from habit and theory. But why was that attachment to be put to the teſt? Would the Conſtitution appear more amiable from war, from the impoſition of additional taxes, and freſh burthens? If any danger were to be apprehended from the propagation of French principles, would it not reſult from war? Every blow ſtruck would favour that propagation, and perhaps even ſucceſs would not correct the operation of it. As to the principles themſelves, it was fit that the Houſe ſhould underſtand what was reprobated in ſo lumping a manner. His own opinion

nion was, that the principles in themſeves were good. What was the French Declaration of Equality? that all men are equal in reſpect of their rights. He who had a ſhilling, had as much right to it as he who had a hundred pounds. Men poſſeſſed equal rights in unequal things. He who had a cottage, had as much power in it as he who had a palace. Theſe, therefore, were good principles. It was the abuſe of them that deſerved reprobation. He had too many controverſies with Mr. Burke, to wiſh to draw upon himſelf additional ſeverity of remark, but ſtill that wiſh ſhould not prevent him from ſaying, "That the People are the ſovereigns in all countries.—That they might amend, alter, and aboliſh the form of government, under which they lived, at pleaſure.—that they might caſhier their monarchs for miſconduct."—James the Second was caſhiered. The people elected William, not only in oppoſition to the rights of deſcent inherent in James, but in oppoſition to the rights of his ſon and daughter. They elected the Houſe of Brunſwick, not an individual member of that Family, but the whole dynaſty. It was clear, therefore, that the preſent Family enjoyed the throne from the ſovereignty of the people. Entertaining, therefore, thoſe opinions, he could not accede to that poſition of Mr. Burke; that though they poſſeſſed the ſovereignty before the Revolution, they did not poſſeſs it afterwards. It was always inherent in them, and thoſe who lived at the Revolution had no

power to ſurrender that ſovereignty which they exerciſed, and to deprive poſterity of it. He had been led into this digreſſion by thoſe who had in ſo general a manner reprobated all the principles of French Legiſlation.

If there were any who, from prejudice or error, diſliked monarchy, ſuch a diſlike had been undoubtedly occaſioned by thoſe who had removed it from the ſolid foundation on which it ſhould ſtand, and had placed it on the flimſy foundation of ſuppoſed rights, ſeparated from the rights of the people. He recurred now to the argument, that principles could not be oppoſed by weapons. The principles introduced into Brabant, were neither introduced nor could they be repelled by force. And this was a circumſtance in which he gloried, that though Dumourier had liberated Brabant, yet French principles were by no means popular there. Adminiſtration ſeemed to conſider principles as an article of commerce, the importation of which could be reſtrained at pleaſure. It was a melancholy conſideration that war had always been the paſſion of men, and he ſadly feared would always continue to be. It was curious to obſerve the grounds on which they had been entered into—the firſt wars were wars for opinions—then came wars for religion, for the extirpation of Lutheraniſm, Calviniſm, and Popery—next wars of conqueſt, but it would be agreed by all, that commercial wars never attained their objects. Having traverſed all the battered grounds, Adminiſtration thought proper

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to return to wars for opinion, to wars for religion. In that excellent publication circulated by the Treaſury, which Mr. Pitt had received from a friend *whom he never ſaw, and whom he did not know*, but which had been ſent to a great majority of the Houſe, Mr. Dupont's Speech was contained. Would any one ſay that Atheiſm was the prevailing principle in France? Or if it were, was this country to carry fire and ſword into France for the purpoſe of propagating the Chriſtian religion? Why then was this ſpeech introduced into the publication? why but to delude and inflame the minds of men in ſuch a manner as to prevent them from exerciſing their reaſon.--- What were the real grounds of war? inſult, injury, or danger. If the country had received inſult, reparation ſhould be demanded. The ſame argument held good with reſpect to the ſecond cauſe. If danger be apprehended, it ſhould be ſtated; and if it could not be averted by peaceful meaſures, then a juſt cauſe of war immediately accrued. As yet he had ſaid nothing of negociators—indeed he felt at a loſs to underſtand how the adminiſtration could treat with perſons whoſe authority they denied. The interruption that had taken place in negociation by Lord Gower's recal he very much lamented.—His ſtay at Paris would not have been a more deciſive act of recognition than negociating with M. Chauvelin. The diſmiſſal of this Gentleman had ſomething new in it. It ſeemed as if the Miniſtry diſliked the man

more than the country which he repreſented. A curious argument had been uſed by a noble Lord, that England ought to hate France for her conduct in the American war. This duty of hatred was a duty perfectly new; but was it the preſent Government of France that interfered in the American War?—No; It was the Old Government, which therefore was properly hated. Indeed it was ſomewhat hard that the French ſhould only be recognized as the legitimate ſucceſſors to what made againſt them. Returning to the grounds of war, Mr. Fox contended again that as the calamaties of war were great, the nation had a right to know the ſpecific cauſe that occaſioned a war. Of all events he deprecated a war, but of all wars he deprecated that which had no ſpecific object, and to which, therefore, he could ſee no end. When the country went to war with America, a ſpecific object was ſtated. He was old enough to remember the beginning of that war—how mens' minds were inflamed by thoſe who ſat on the Miniſterial ſide of the Houſe, *and who were now returning to the place from whence they came.*—He was old enough to remember the abuſe of the Congreſs, of Mr. Hancock, and Mr. Adams; he alſo remembered the ſubſequent degradation to which this country was forced to ſubmit. In that event, at leaſt a ſpecific cauſe was ſtated, now, however, there was none. Was the Decree of the 19th of November one? No. Was the reduction of Brabant one? No. Would the Emperor and the King of Pruſſia fight

fight alone for the Netherlands? No. They might have had them without a blow if they had refrained from invading France. As therefore no ſpecific object had been ſtated, he had a right to ſay, that the country was going to war blind-folded and in the dark. How many would believe that the war was to eſtabliſh the old deſpotiſm of France. The Miniſter at leaſt ought to undeceive thoſe who indulged this horrible ſuppoſition. He ought to do more, he ought to point out the real cauſe which would entitle him to a vote of thanks, and to a general amneſty for all his former errors. He entreated him to ſurvey the conſequences—to look at poſſible misfortunes—at the ſtate of Ireland—he ought to imagine that it might involve in it conſequences injurious to the very exiſtence of the Conſtitution. He ought not to ſuffer it to be ſaid, that it was a war of Kings againſt the People—of men of property againſt thoſe who had none, or that the country was fighting for the language of the Duke of Brunſwick's miſerable Manifeſtoes. Having ſtated the grounds on which he deprecated a war, he begged to ſay one word of himſelf. He could not walk about the ſtreets without hearing whiſpers of plots and deſigns, and of his own and his friends correſpondence with men in France. If any had reaſon to believe that he, or any with whom he was connected, really adopted ſuch a a mode of conduct, he challenged them to come forth and inſtitute an enquiry. He did not know,

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before his peruſal of Mr. Law's letter, that he lived in a town, where any perſons calling themſelves gentlemen thought it decent or proper to receive anonymous letters, attaching grievous charges to different perſons, and to anſwer thoſe letters. As ſuch practices, however, were adopted, he thought it proper to make a challenge in the broadeſt manner that language could admit of. If any man had heard that he had correſponded with improper perſons in France, he had heard a falſehood. Having made this aſſertion, he conceived that he poſſeſſed a right to demand the candour of the Houſe; and to deſire that his actions ſhould not be imputed to motives of an improper, or a ſiniſter nature.

SPEECH

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OF THE

RIGHT HON. CHARLES J. FOX

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

FEBRUARY 12, 1793.

MR. FOX ſaid, that on an occaſion ſo important, and not fearing the charge of puſillanimity from conſidering the preſent criſis as highly alarming, it would ill become the duty which he owed to his conſtituents and to the nation, to decline meeting the imputation of being the abettor of France, with which he was already menaced; or by the bold miſconſtruction of his ſentiments and arguments to which he had been accuſtomed, to be deterred from examining and ſtating what was the true ſituation in which the country was involved in war. He had never accuſed the Honourable Gentleman who had ſeconded the addreſs of a ſyſtematical oppoſition to Miniſters, nor of acting upon any ſyſtem; but he called upon him to name thoſe perſons in the Houſe, if any ſuch there were, whom he meant to include under the deſcription of ſupporters of the French ſyſtem. The Hon. Gentleman knew that juſt ſo were thoſe treated who oppoſed the folly and injuſtice of the American

rican war. Yet, notwithſtanding their being long and induſtriouſly miſrepreſented as the abettors of rebellion, a band of as patriotic and as honourable men as ever deſerved public gratitude by public ſervices, by ſome of whom he truſted he ſhould be ſupported in oppoſing the Addreſs now moved, united their abilities to put an end to that war, and at length ſucceeded. The Right Hon. Gentleman who moved the Addreſs, ſtated the origin and neceſſity of the war, on the grounds widely different from thoſe aſſumed by the Hon. Gentleman who ſeconded it. The latter ſaid, the power of France, under every change of men and circumſtances was a monſter, whoſe hand was againſt all nations, and that the hand of every nation ought to be againſt France. The former had ſaid, the cauſe of the war was not our general bad opinion of France, but ſpecific aggreſſions on the part of France. So far the difference was great with reſpect to our immediate ſituation of being actually at war; and it was ſtill greater when we came to enquire into our proſpect of peace. If we were at war becauſe France was a monſter whoſe hand was againſt all nations, it muſt be *bellum internecinum*—a war to extermination; for nothing but unconditional ſubmiſſion could be adequate to the end for which the war was undertaken, and to that alone muſt we look for a ſafe or honourable peace. If, on the contrary, we were at war on account of a ſpecific aggreſſion, for that aggreſſion atonement might be made, and

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the object being obtained, peace might be concluded. He therefore hoped that the Right Honourable Mover of the Addreſs was ſincere in the ſtatement he had given, although he had failed in making out the grounds on which he endeavoured to ſupport it. Few of thoſe, he truſted, who had been moſt zealous in recommending the expediency of this war, wiſhed it to be a war of extermination—a war for extirpating French principles, not for circumſcribing French power; yet all their arguments tended to alarm him. They never talked of the danger of the French power without introducing, as a danger more imminent, the propagation of French principles. The Hon. Gentleman aſked, if he could be expected to make terms with an highwayman, or to take the highwayman's purſe as a ſatisfaction for the attack upon his own? Certainly not. The Hon. Gentleman knew his duty to ſociety better, than to let the highwayman eſcape, if he had the means of bringing him to puniſhment. But this alluſion ſhewed that the war with France was, in the opinion of the Hon. Gentleman, a war of vindictive juſtice. We ſaid, that our object in war was not to effect a change in the internal government of France, but to weaken her power, which in its preſent ſtate was dangerous to us, our allies, and to Europe; and that object obtained, we were willing to make peace. But would any man ſay, that when he had diſarmed an highwayman, it was ſafe to leave him free to get other arms? No man, certainly; and no

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more on this principle could we in any ſtate of humiliation to which the power of France might be reduced, leave her at liberty to recruit that power and to renew aggreſſions, to which ſhe contended ſhe muſt have the inclination whenever ſhe had the means. The Hon. Gentleman might ſupport Miniſters for any reaſons that to him ſhould ſeem good—either becauſe he thought them wiſe or ignorant, honeſt or diſhoneſt; but he had no right to accuſe thoſe who thought different from himſelf, of ſowing diſaffection among the people becauſe they wiſhed to inform the people, what were the true grounds of the war, which they were called upon to ſupport with their property and their lives. The Hon. Gentleman rejoiced, that the public entertained a more favourable opinion of Miniſters, in the preſent criſis, than Miniſters deſerved. Did he mean to argue, that when Miniſters, by their miſconduct had brought the country into war, and the people ignorant of their true characters, were diſpoſed to think well of them, the Houſe of Commons, who knew better, ſhould endeavour to continue, inſtead of removing this deluſion? His doctrine would then come to this—that implicit confidence in Miniſters, ſo often and ſo juſtly reprobated, was the firſt duty of the Houſe, that they had nothing to watch, and ought never to enquire. Monarchy, it was truly ſaid, was the corner-ſtone of our Conſtitution, and of all the bleſſings we enjoyed under it; but it was not only the corner-ſtone—there was another fully as

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important—the conſtant jealouſy and vigilance both of the people and their repreſentatives, with reſpect to all the arts of the Executive Power. He felt himſelf conſiderably diſappointed by his Majeſty's Miniſters. He had flattered himſelf that when unanimity was ſo very deſirable, they would have brought a Meſſage from his Majeſty, calculated to enſure it; that they would not have conſidered triumphing over the very ſmall number to which they boaſted of having reduced their opponents, to be a matter of ſuch conſequence, as to call for an Addreſs to which they knew that few opponents could not agree, becauſe to do ſo muſt preclude them from all ſubſequent enquiry. If they had moved an Addreſs, ſimply pledging the cordial co-operation of the Houſe in proſecuting a juſt and neceſſary war to a ſafe and honourable peace, to ſuch an Addreſs, whatever might have been his opinion of the previous conduct of Miniſters, whether he had thought it temperate and conciliatory, or arrogant and provoking, he ſhould have agreed. But the Houſe was now called upon to vote, that Miniſters had given no cauſe, or provocation for the war; to ſay, that they would enter into inveſtigation of the origin of the war; to give them indemnity for the paſt, and a promiſe of ſupport for the future. This was the manifeſt tendency of the Addreſs; and to prevent the want of unanimity, which ſuch an Addreſs could not but occaſion, he ſhould move an amendment, in which even the warmeſt advocates of the

war might concur, becauſe it expreſſed no diſapprobation of the conduct of Miniſters, as theirs ought to have expreſſed no approbation. But firſt he muſt examine the alledged cauſes of the war. He would not enter into any of the common place arguments on the miſeries and calamities inſeparable from war. He did not mean to call them common places in the bad ſenſe of the word, for they were truths familiar to the minds of men, that they were never liſtened to without aſſent; and, however unneceſſary it might be to enforce them by eloquence, or amplify them by declamation, their being univerſally admitted was ſufficient to prove, that war ſhould never be undertaken when peace could be maintained without breach of public faith, tarniſhing national honour, or riſking future ſecurity. The cauſes of war with France were in no reſpect different now from what they were under the government of Louis XIV. or Louis XVI. What then were theſe cauſes? not an inſult or aggreſſion when ſpecially demanded. What inſtance had Miniſters produced of ſuch demand and of ſuch refuſal? He admitted that the Decree of November 19th intitled this country to require an explanation; but even by this they could not ſhew that any clear and ſpecific explanation had been demanded. Security that they would not act upon that Decree was indeed mentioned in one of Lord Grenville's letters, but that ſecurity was neither ſpecified, nor even named. The ſame might be ſaid with reſpect to the opening of the Scheldt—the ſame reſpecting

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their conqueſt in Brabant. We complained of an attack on the rights of our ally, we remonſtrated againſt an acceſſion of territory, alarming to Europe; but we propoſed nothing that would be admitted as ſatisfaction for the injury; we pointed out nothing that would remove our alarm. Lord Grenville ſaid ſomething about withdrawing their troops from the Auſtrian Netherlands; but if by it was underſtood a requiſition to withdraw their troops while they were at war with the Emperor, without any condition that ſuch evacuation of territory conquered from the enemy was to be the price of the peace, it was ſuch an inſult as entitled them to demand ſatisfaction of us. The ſame argument applied to their conqueſt of Savoy from the King of Sardinia, with whom, in his opinion, they were at war as much as with the Emperor. Would it be ſaid that it was our buſineſs only to complain and theirs to propoſe ſatisfaction? Common ſenſe muſt ſee that this was expecting too much from one independent power to another. By what clue could they diſcover what would ſatisfy thoſe who did not chooſe to tell with what they would be ſatisfied? How could they judge of the too little or the too much? And it was not natural in them to ſuppoſe that complaints for which nothing was ſtated as adequate ſatisfaction, there was no diſpoſition to withdraw? Yet on this the whole queſtion of aggreſſion hinged; for that the refuſal of ſatisfaction and not the inſult, was the juſtifiable cauſe of war, was not merely his opinion, but the opinion of

all the writers on the law of nations; and how could that be ſaid to have been refuſed which was never aſked; He lamented, that at a time when the deareſt intereſts of the country were at ſtake, the Houſe ſhould have felt ſo little concern as to deprive him of the opportunity of making the motion of which he had given notice, for want of a ſufficient attendance to ballot for an Election Committee. By that motion he meant to preſs for a diſtinct and ſpecific declaration to the cauſes of the war, and his ſucceſs would have had this good effect, that both we and the enemy would have known the ground of conteſt, been able to appreciate them, and the war might have been but of ſhort duration. There was much in the Decree by which the French had declared war, which could not fairly be alledged as juſt cauſe of war: But, under the former good government of France, was it unuſual to crowd into a manifeſto ſetting forth the cauſes of war, every complaint that could be imagined good bad, and indifferent? It were indeed to be wiſhed that nothing were introduced into ſuch declarations but what was at once true and important; but ſuch had not yet been the practice of Stateſmen, who ſeemed more attentive to the number than the validity of their complaints. In 1779, the Spaniſh declaration was ſwelled to 100 articles; and to examine every article of the preſent French declaration would only ſhew that thoſe who now exerciſed the Executive Government were no wiſer

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than their predeceſſors. To have ſuffered Earl Gower to remain at Paris after the 10th of Auguſt, would have implied no recognition of the Government that ſucceeded that from which he had his formal miſſion, any more than to have negotiated with that Government in the moſt direct and ſafe way, in preference to the indirect and hazardous. But the Right Honourable Gentlemen, who could not get rid of the idea of recognition, exclaimed, "Would you recognize a Government which, by its own confeſſion, is no Government; which declares itſelf only proviſional till a Government can be framed?" This he would anſwer was the ſafeſt of all recognitions, if a recognition it muſt be, for the Government being only proviſional, we could only be underſtood to recognize proviſionally, and were at liberty to act as the caſe might require with any other that might ariſe in its ſtead. But did not hiſtory ſhew us, that to treat and to recognize were not conſidered as the ſame? Did not we treat with Philip of Spain, as king, at the very time that we were at war to diſpute his ſucceſſion! and was not the recognition of his title far from being conſidered as admitted by us on that account, actually ſtipulated as an article of the peace? Did not France, when at war to diſpute the acceſſion of William III. to the throne of England, treat with him as King, and was not the recognition of his title alſo made one of the conditions of peace? Still, however, he would admit, that withdrawing our miniſter, or not

ſending another, was not a juſt cauſe of war on the part of France; but could it be denied, that to treat one nation in a manner different from others was a ſymptom of hoſtility? The recalling of miniſters was certainly once conſidered as an indication of war, for the Commercial Treaty provided for a caſe where no war was declared but by ſuch recal. None of the alledged grounds in the French Declaration could be more abſurd than that the circulation of their aſſignats were prohibited in this country, for that was only a meaſure of internal regulations, as much as it would be to prohibit thet circulation of paper iſſued among ourſelves that, perhaps, ſtood not a much ſurer capital. But even here we were not quite impartial, for although that paper was called worth nothing which at preſent brought fourteen-pence halfpenny for half a crown, the paper created by that gigantic act of ſwindling, the aſſignats iſſued by the leaders of the Combined Armies, were not certainly worth more, but we had not thought it neceſſary to forbid the circulation of them; we had not prohibited the circulation of American paper even during the war, nor was it at all neceſſary: ſuch paper wanted no prohibition. Prohibiting the exportation of foreign corn to French ports, while it was free to other countries, it was ſaid, aroſe from preceding circumſtances. According to theſe circumſtances it might be a juſtifiable or unjuſtifiable act of hoſtility, but it was an act of hoſtility ſo ſevere that the circumſtances

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which juſtified it, would have juſtified a war, and no ſuch circumſtances, as he had already proved, could be ſhewn. As to the Alien Bill, the Right Honourable Gentleman had ſaid, the French had made regulations in their own country by which the treaty was before completely broken and at an end. Did he complain of thoſe regulations, for it was expreſsly provided by the treaty itſelf, that no violation ſhould put an end to it till complaint was made, and redreſs refuſed? But here lay the important difference. The French made no regulation that put aliens on a different footing from Frenchmen. They made general regulations of ſafety and police, as every nation had a right to do. We made regulations affecting aliens only; confeſſed to be more particularly intended to apply to Frenchmen.—By us, therefore, and not by the French, was the commercial treaty broken. Our ſending a ſquadron to the Scheldt they complained of as an injury. And here the Right Hon. Gentleman introduced the popular topic of their *charming operations in Belgium*, the diſturbance of which they thought themſelves entitled to reſent as an aggreſſion. He was as little diſpoſed to defend their operations in Belgium as the Right Hon. Gentleman, although he ſaw not for what purpoſe they were here alluded to, unleſs to inflame the paſſions, and miſlead the judgment; but if by that ſquadron we had diſturbed them in their operations of war againſt the Emperor, which he admitted we had not done, they would have had

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cauſe to complain. " Then," ſays the Right Hon. Gentleman, " they complain of our conduct on the afflicting news of the murder of their King! what! ſhall we not grieve for the untimely fate of an innocent monarch moſt cruelly put to death by his own ſubjects? Shall we not be permitted to teſtify our ſorrow and abhorrence on an event that outrages every principle of juſtice, and ſhocks every feeling of humanity?" Of that event he ſhould never ſpeak but with grief and deteſtation. But was the expreſſion of our ſorrow all. Was not the atrocious event made the ſubject of a meſſage from his Majeſty to both Houſes of Parliament? And now, he would aſk the few more candid men who owned that they thought this event alone a ſufficient cauſe of war, what end could be gained by further negociation with Chauvelin, with Maret or Dumourier? Did Miniſters mean to barter the blood of this ill-fated Monarch for any of the points in diſpute; to ſay, the evacuation of Brabant ſhall atone for ſo much, the evacuation of Savoy for ſo much more? Of this he would accuſe no man; but on their principle, when the crime was committed, negociation muſt ceaſe. He agreed, however, with the Right Hon. Gentleman, and he was glad to hear him ſay ſo, that this crime was no cauſe of war; but if it were admitted, it was ſurely not decent that the ſubject of war ſhould never be even mentioned without reverting to the death of the king. When he propoſed ſending an Ambaſſador to France, " What!"

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ſaid the Right Honourable Gentleman, "ſend an Ambaſſador to men that are trying their king!" If we had ſent an Ambaſſador, even then; had our conduct towards the French been more candid and conciliating, the fatal iſſue of that trial might have been prevented. But ſaid the Rt. Hon. Gent. we negociated unofficially. The importance, to any wiſe purpoſe, between official and unofficial negociation, of thus bartering inſtead of ſelling, he could never underſtand; but even to this mode of negociating, the diſmiſſion of M. Chauvelin put an end. But M. Chauvelin went away the very day after he received the order, although he might have ſtaid eight days and negociated all the while. Was it ſo extraordinary a thing that a man of honour, receiving ſuch an order, ſhould not chuſe to run the riſk of inſult, by ſtaying the full time allowed him; or could he imagine that his ready compliance with ſuch on order would be conſidered as an offence; when M. Chauvelin went away and M. Maret did not think himſelf authoriſed to negociate, Miniſters ſent a Meſſage to Lord Auckland, to negociate with General Dumourier, which reached him too late. Admitting this to be a proof of their wiſh to negociate, what was their conduct from the opening of the Seſſion? If he or any of his friends propoſed to negociate—"Negociate!" they exclaimed, "we are already at war!" Now it appeared that they did negociate with unaccredited agents, although the Secretary of State had ſaid ſuch a negociation was not compatible

patible with his belief, and laſt of all, ſtrange conduct for lovers of peace! they ordered to quit the country the only perſon with whom they could negociate in their unofficial way. He was happy to ſee the Right Honourable Gentleman ſo much aſhamed of this mutilated farce of negociation, as to be glad to piece it out with Lord Auckland and General Dumourier. Then was aſked the miſerable queſtion, "What intereſt have Miniſters in promoting war, if, as it has been ſaid, that the Miniſters who begin war in this country are never allowed to conclude it?" Admitting this to be true, ſurely they who endeavour to avert a war, ought to be allowed ſome credit for the purity of their motives. But Miniſters never opened a fair communication on the points in diſpute with France. They acted like men afraid of aſking ſatisfaction, for fear that it ſhould be granted—of ſtating the ſpecific cauſes of war, leſt they ſhould loſe the pretext. An opinion ſome were ſtated, had been adverted to, that the people might conſider this as a war in which Kings were more concerned than their ſubjects. He felt great reſpect for Monarchy. But with all due reverence for crowned heads, was it impoſſible to conceive that kings may love, not limited but unlimited monarchy; and that reſiſtance to the limited monarchy attempted to be eſtabliſhed in France, in the room of the unlimited monarchy, by which that country was formerly governed, might have been the true cauſe of the combination of ſome of the crowned heads of Europe

rope. Our king had ſat too long on the throne of a free kingdom, he had too much experience, that the love of his people was a ſtronger defence than guards and armies to forfeit that love, by tranſgreſſing the bounds which the Conſtitution preſcribed to him, were even his virtues and his wiſdom leſs than they were known to be. But had not kings the frailties of other men? Were they not liable to be adviſed? What had become of that freedom of ſpeech which was the boaſt of Parliament, if he might not ſuppoſe, that by evil Counſellors their ears might be poiſoned and their hearts deceived? He therefore feared, that this war would be ſuppoſed a war for reſtoring monarchy in France, and for ſupporting rather the cauſe of Kings, than the cauſe of the people.—He was happy that the public abhorrence of a war on ſuch a motive was ſo great that the Right Hon. Gentleman felt himſelf called upon to diſclaim it: but how had Miniſters acted? They had taken advantage of the French, they had negociated without propoſing ſpecific terms, and then broke off the negociation.—At home they had alarmed the people that their own Conſtitution was in danger, and they made uſe of a melancholy event, which, however it might affect us as men, did not concern us as a nation, to inflame our paſſions and impel us to war; and now that we are at war, they durſt not avow the cauſes of it, nor tell us on what terms peace might have been preſerved. He rejoiced to hear that we had no treaty with the Emperor.—If our

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motives were now ſuſpected, he hoped our future conduct would be ſuch as to put away ſuſpicion, He hoped we neither had nor ſhould have any treaty with the combined powers, unleſs our objects were ſpecifically ſtated. By the promiſe in his Majeſty's Speech, of employing firm and temperate meaſures, he underſtood, firſt, remonſtrance on the cauſes of complaint, then a ſpecific demand of ſatisfaction, and an armament to give efficacy to both. On his hope of the firſt two he had voted for the third. The Right Hon. Gentleman ſaid we had received inſults that ought not to have been borne for twenty-four hours. Theſe were magnified words. In the affair of Nootka Sound, the aggreſſion by Spain was as direct and unqualified as any that could be ſtated, and yet we had borne it for twenty-four days. Why was not the ſame courſe purſued now as then? He was now called upon, as a Member of that Houſe, to ſupport his Majeſty in the war, for the war was begun, and he would do it; but he was not pledged to any of thoſe crooked reaſonings on which ſome Gentlemen grounded their ſupport of Miniſters, nor leſs bound to watch them becauſe, by their miſconduct, we had been forced into a war, which both the dignity and the ſecurity of Great Britain would have been better conſulted in avoiding. He was never ſanguine on the ſucceſs of war. It might be glorious to our army and our navy, and yet ruinous to the people. The event of the laſt campaign—*procul abſit omen*—and the example of the

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American War, had taught him that we might be compelled to make peace on terms leſs advantageous than could have been obtained without unſheathing the ſword; and if this might be the conſequence to us, the conſequences to our ally the Dutch muſt be ſuch as he would not ſuffer himſelf to anticipate. The ordering M. Chauvelin to depart the kingdom, and the ſtopping the exportation of corn to France, when exportation was allowed to other countries, were acts of hoſtility and provocation on our part; which did not allow us to ſay, as the propoſed Addreſs ſaid, that the war was an unprovoked aggreſſion on the part of France. Truth and juſtice were preferable to high ſounding words, and therefore he ſhould move an amendment, containing nothing that was not ſtrictly true, and in voting which the Houſe might be unanimous. He concluded by moving an Amendment, ſimilar to that moved by Lord Lauderdale in the Houſe of Lords.

SPEECH

OF THE

RIGHT HON. CHARLES J. FOX

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

FEBRUARY 18, 1793.

The Order of the Day being read.

MR. FOX ſaid, he had delivered his ſentiments ſo frequently on the ſeveral points included in his intended Motion, that the Houſe could not expect him to add much that was new. Having been reminded in the laſt debate with repeating the ſame things over and over, he ſhould now content himſelf with referring to the opinions he had formerly delivered; and hoped that he ſhould not again be reproached, in the ſame breath that reminded him of a repetition, with failing to repeat any one of thoſe opinions to whatever part of the ſubject it might be thought to relate. The preſent criſis was awful. He had done every thing in his power to avert the calamity of war; and he did intend to have made one more attempt, if he had not been moſt unaccountably prevented by the failure of public buſineſs for a whole week. That opportunity was unfortunately loſt. We were now

actually

actually engaged in war; and being so engaged, there could be no difference of opinion on the necessity of supporting it with vigour. No want of disposition to support it could be imputed to him; for on the debate on his Majesty's Message, announcing that we were at war, he had moved an amendment to the Address, as much pledging the House to a very vigorous support of it, as the Address proposed by his Majesty's Ministers, and better calculated to ensure unanimity. But the more he felt himself bound to support the war, the more he felt himself bound to object to the measures which, as far as yet appeared, had unnecessarily led to it. The necessity of the war might be defended on two principles: First, the *malus animus*, or general bad disposition of the French towards this country; the crimes they have committed among themselves; the systems they have endeavoured to establish, if systems they might be called; in short, the internal Government of their country. On this principle, there were few indeed that would venture to defend it; and this being disavowed as the cause of war by his Majesty's Ministers, it was unnecessary for him to dwell upon it. —Second, that various things have been done by the French, manifestly extending beyond their own country, and affecting the interests of us and our allies; for which, unless satisfaction were given, we must enforce satisfaction by arms. This he considered as the only principle on which the necessity of the war could be truly defended, and in this he was

ſure the great majority of the Houſe and of the country were of the ſame opinion. His object was to record this in an addreſs; and whatever objection there might be as to time or circumſtances, could he obtain the ſenſe of the Houſe purely upon the principle, he ſhould be very ſanguine in his hopes of ſucceſs. Such a record would be a guide to their conduct in the war, and a land-mark on which to fix their attention for the attainment of peace. In examining the alledged caſes of provocation, he had maintained that they were all objects of negociation, and ſuch as till ſatisfaction was explicitly demanded and refuſed, did not juſtify reſorting to the laſt extremity. He had perhaps alſo ſaid, that Miniſters did not appear to have purſued the courſe which was naturally to be expected from their profeſſions. He did not mean to charge them with adopting one principle for debate and another for action; but he thought they had ſuffered themſelves to be impoſed upon, and miſled by thoſe who wiſhed to go to war with France on account of her internal government, and therefore took all occaſions of repreſenting the French as utterly and irreconcileably hoſtile to this country. It was always fair to compare the conduct of men in any particular inſtance with their conduct on other occaſions. If the rights of neutral nations were now loudly extolled; if the danger to be apprehended from the aggrandizement of any power, was magnified as the juſt cauſes of the preſent war; and if, on looking to another quarter, we ſaw the

rights

rights of Poland, of a neutral and independent nation, openly trampled upon; its territory invaded to the manifeſt aggrandizement of other powers, and no war declared or menaced, not even a remonſtrance interpoſed, for if any had been interpoſed, it was yet a ſecret—could we be blamed for ſuſpecting that the pretended was not the real object of the preſent war—that what we are not told, was in fact the object, and what we are told only the colour and pretext? The war, however, be the real cauſe what it might, would be much leſs calamitous to this country, if, in the proſecution of it, we could do without allying ourſelves with thoſe who had made war on France, for the avowed purpoſe of interfering in her internal Government; if we could avoid entering into engagements that might fetter us in our negociations for peace: Since negociation muſt be the iſſue of every war that was not a war of abſolute conqueſt, if we ſhould ſhun the diſgrace of becoming parties with thoſe who in firſt attempting to invade France, and ſome of them ſince invading Poland, had violated all the rights of nations, all the principles of juſtice and honour. On the firſt principle he had already ſtated, as one of two on which it might be attempted to juſtify the neceſſity of the preſent war, being moſt ſtudiouſly diſclaimed by Miniſters, and all but a very few Members of that Houſe, it was unneceſſary for him to ſay any thing. On the ſecond he had ſaid, that the alledged cauſes of complaint were not cauſes of war previous to negoci-

ation, his opinions were not new, as they had formerly been called, but ſuch as he had always entertained, from the firſt moment of his forming opinions upon ſuch ſubjects.—Neither were they ſingular: he had ſince looked into the Writers on the Laws of Nations, and by all the moſt approved, it was laid down as an axiom, that injuries, be they what they may, are not the juſt cauſe of war, till reparation and ſatisfaction had been fairly and openly demanded, and evaded or refuſed. Some of them even go ſo far as to ſay, that reparation and ſatisfaction ought to be demanded, both previous and ſubſequent to the declaration of war, in order to make the war juſt. Our cauſes of complaint againſt France were, firſt, the attempt to open the navigation of the Scheldt; ſecond, the Decree of the 19th November, ſuppoſed to be directed againſt the peace of other nations; third, their extenſion of their territory by conqueſt. The firſt of theſe was obviouſly and confeſſedly an object of negociation. The ſecond was alſo to be accommodated by negociation; becauſe an explanation that they did not mean what we underſtood by it, and a ſtipulation that it ſhould not be acted upon in the ſenſe in which we underſtood it, was all that could be obtained even by war. The third was more difficult, for it involved in it the evacuation of the countries conquered, and ſecurity that they ſhould in no ſenſe be annexed to France; and no ſuch ſecurity could perhaps at preſent be deviſed. But if we were aware of this; if we ſaw that during

during the war in which the French are engaged with other powers, they had no ſuch ſecurity to offer; if we knew that we were aſking what could not be given, the whole of our pretended negociation, ſuch as it had been, was a farce and a deluſion—not an honeſt endeavour to preſerve the bleſſings of peace, but a fraudulent expedient to throw duſt in the eyes of the people of this country, in order that they might be blindly hurried into war. The more he attended to the printed papers of correſpondence, the oftner he read Lord Grenville's letter to M. Chauvelin, ſo often alluded to, the more convinced he was how extremely deficient we had been in communicating the terms on which we thought peace might be maintained. We told them they muſt keep within their own territory; but how were they to do this when attacked by two armies, that retired out of their territory only to repair the loſſes of their firſt miſcarriage, and prepare for a freſh irruption? When to this ſtudied concealment of terms were added the haughty language of all our communications, and the difficulties thrown in the way of all negociation; we muſt ſurely admit, that it was not eaſy for the French to know with what we would be ſatisfied, nor to diſcover on what terms our amity (not our alliance, for that he had never ſuggeſted, though the imputation had been boldly made) could be conciliated. When to all theſe he added the language held in that houſe by Miniſters, although he by no means admitted that ſpeeches in that

Houſe

Houſe were to be ſifted for cauſes of war by foreign powers, any more than ſpeeches in the French Convention by us; and laſt of all, the paper tranſmitted by Lord Auckland, at the Hague, to the States General—a paper which for contempt and ridicule of the French, ſtood unparalleled in diplomatic hiſtory—a paper, in which the whole of them, without diſtinction, who had been in the exerciſe of power ſince the commencement of the Revolution, were ſtyled *a ſet of wretches inveſting themſelves with the title of philoſophers, and preſuming in the dream of their vanity to think themſelves capable of eſtabliſhing a new order of ſociety*, &c. &c.—How could he hope the French to expect that any thing would be conſidered as ſatisfactory or any pledge a ſufficient ſecurity?—Compare the Lord Auckland's language at the Hague, with the pacific conduct of Miniſters at home, as repreſented by themſelves. While they were trying every means to conciliate, while with moderation to an exceſs, which they could not help thinking culpable, they were publicly ordering Monſ. Chauvelin to quit the kingdom within eight days, but privately telling him, that he might ſtay and negociate, while they were waiting for propoſitions from M. Maret, which M. Maret did not make. While they were ſending inſtructions to Lord Auckland to negociate with General Dumourier, Lord Auckland was writing that ſilly and inſulting paper by their inſtructions; for if he did it without, he was very unfit for his

ſituation,

ſituation, and muſt have been inſtantly recalled.—Thus, while they were publicly courting peace, they were uſing every clandeſtine manœuvre to provoke war. For theſe reaſons he ſhould move, that Miniſters had not employed proper means for preſerving peace, without ſacrificing the honour or the ſafety of this country. He came next to conſider their conduct with reſpect to Poland. He had formerly ſaid, that he wiſhed not to ſpeak harſhly of Foreign Princes in that Houſe, although the period was not long ſince paſſed, when it was thought perfectly allowable to talk of the Empreſs of Ruſſia as a Princeſs of inſatiable ambition, and of the late Emperor as a Prince too faithleſs to be relied upon. But when he ſpoke of the King of Pruſſia, he deſired to be underſtood as ſpeaking of the cabinet of the Court of Berlin, whoſe conduct he was as free to criticiſe as other Gentlemen the conduct of the Executive Council of France. In May 1791, a revolution took place in Poland on the ſuggeſtion, certainly with the concurrence, of the King of Pruſſia; and, as was pretty generally imagined, although not authentically known, with the concurrence, of the Court of London. By a diſpatch to his Miniſter at Warſaw, the King of Pruſſia expreſſed the lively intereſt which he had always taken in the happineſs of Poland and the confirmation of her new conſtitution, and his approbation of the choice of the Elector of Saxony and his deſcendants to fill the throne of Poland, made hereditary by the new order of things, after

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the death of the reigning King. In 1792, the Empreſs of Ruſſia, without the leaſt plauſible pretext, but the change in the internal government of the country, invaded Poland. Poland called upon the King of Pruſſia, with whoſe expreſs approbation this change had been effected, for the ſtipulated ſuccours of an exiſting treaty of alliance. He replied that the ſtate of things being entirely changed ſince that alliance, and the preſent conjuncture brought on by the Revolution of May 1791, poſterior to his treaty, it did not become him to give Poland any aſſiſtance, unleſs indeed ſhe choſe to retrace all the ſteps of that Revolution, and then he would interpoſe his good offices both with Ruſſia and the Emperor to reconcile the *different intereſts*. The different intereſts of foreign powers in the internal government of a free and independent nation! It was ſingular that Miniſters ſhould be ſo keen to mark and ſtigmatize all the inconſiſtencies of the French with their former declarations, which had been too great and too many, and yet could ſee without emotion ſuch inconſiſtency, not to ſay perfidy, as this. He was not the defender of the groſs departures from their own principles of the French; but if we thought it unſafe to treat with them, becauſe of their perfidy, we had little inducement to u nite with the King of Pruſſia, who had violated not only principles, but an expreſs treaty, in a more particular and pointed manner, than they had yet had an opportunity of doing. Among the powers

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at war, or likely to be at war with France, there was no great option of good faith. But the French, it was ſaid, violated their principles for the ſake of robbery and rapine, to ſeize on territory, and plunder property. Let us look again to the King of Pruſſia. In 1792 he limited the cauſe of war againſt Poland by Ruſſia, to the new Conſtitution, which he himſelf had approved, and promiſed to defend. This obnoxious conſtitution completely ſubverted, and that excellent old Republic—for theſe crowned heads were great Republicans when it ſuited their convenience—which had for ages made the happineſs of Poland, re-eſtabliſhed on its ancient baſis, he would interpoſe his good offices to conciliate the different intereſts and reſtore peace. What then prevented? Was not the new Conſtitution completely ſubverted? Did not the Ruſſian troops ſucceed in over-running Poland? Were they not in poſſeſſion of the whole country? And was not the Empreſs of Ruſſia able to reſtore the excellent old Republic, and convinced of her own ſucceſs? Not ſo with the King of Pruſſia. He was a critic in principles. When he approved of their Revolution, the principles of the Poles were unexceptionable; when they were attempting a brave but unſucceſsful reſiſtance to a more powerful adverſary, their principles were not dangerous; but when they were overpowered by ſuperior force, when they had laid down their arms, and ſubmitted to their conqueror, when their whole country was poſſeſſed by a foreign army; then he diſcovered

covered that they had got French principles among them, subverſive of all government, and deſtructive of all ſociety. And how did he cure them of theſe abominable principles?—O!—by an admirable remedy! invading their country, and taking poſſeſſion of their towns. Are they tainted with Jacobiniſm? hew down the gates of Thorn, and march in the Pruſſian troops. Do they deny that they entertain ſuch principles? ſeize upon Dantzick, and annex it to the Dominions of Pruſſia. Now did not this ſeizure and ſpoil of Poland tend to the aggrandizement of the powers by whom it was perpetrated? Was it not a greater and more contemptuous violation of the law of nations than the French had yet been guilty of? Undoubtedly it was. Had we oppoſed it? Had we remonſtrated againſt it? If Miniſters had any ſuch remonſtrances to ſhew, they would produce them in due time, and the Houſe would judge of them; but while none were produced, or even mentioned, he muſt preſume that none had been made. The invaſion of Poland had this material aggravation, that the powers who invaded were not themſelves attacked at the time. They had not the excuſe of the French to plead, that they did it in a paroxyſm of fear and danger, circumſtances that prompt nations, as well as individuals, to many acts of impolicy and injuſtice. The King of Pruſſia firſt connives at, or conſents to, the invaſion of Poland, which he was bound by treaty to defend—Next he attempts an unprovoked invaſion of France, and is foiled—

foiled—how does he revenge the disgrace of his repulse? By encreasing his army on the Rhine, by concentrating his forces for a fresh attack? No—he more gallantly turns round on defenceless Poland, and indemnifies his losses by seizing on towns where he can meet no resistance. It was not, therefore, on any general system of attention to the balance of Europe that Ministers were acting, since, while they pretended to consider it as of the utmost importance in one case, they had suffered it to be most flagrantly infringed upon in another. He concluded with moving the following Resolutions:—

I. That it is not for the power or interest of Great Britain to make war upon France, on account of the internal circumstances of that country, for the purpose either of suppressing or punishing any opinions and principles, however pernicious in their tendency, which may prevail there, or of establishing among the French people any particular form of Government.

II. That the particular complaints which have been stated against the conduct of the French Government, are not of a nature to justify war in the first instance, without having attempted to obtain redress by negociation.

III. That it appears to this House, that, in the late negociation between his Majesty's Ministers and the Agents of the French Government, the said Ministers did not take such measures as were likely to procure redress without a rupture for the grievances of which they complained, and particularly that they never stated distinctly to the French Government, any terms and conditions, the accession to which, on the part of France, would induce his Majesty to persevere in a system of neutrality.

IV. That it does not appear that the ſecurity of Europe, and the rights of independent nations, which have been ſtated as grounds of war againſt France, have been attended to by his Majeſty's Miniſters in the caſe of Poland, in the invaſion of which unhappy country, both in the laſt year, and more recently, the moſt open contempt of the law of nations, and the moſt unjuſtifiable ſpirit of aggrandizement, has been manifeſted, without having produced, as far as appears to this Houſe, any remonſtrance from his Majeſty's Miniſters.

V. That it is the duty of his Majeſty's Miniſters in the preſent criſis, to adviſe his Majeſty againſt entering into engagements which may prevent Great Britain from making a ſeparate peace, whenever the intereſt of his Majeſty and his people may render ſuch a meaſure adviſeable; or which may countenance an opinion in Europe, that his Majeſty is acting in concert with other powers for the unjuſtifiable purpoſe of compelling the people of France, to ſubmit to a form of Government not approved by that nation.

Mr. Sheridan ſeconded the Reſolutions.

Mr. Burke apologiſed to Mr. Fox, for imputing to him any unneceſſary repetitions; but was averſe to the Reſolutions.

Mr. Grey ſupported at ſome length the Reſolutions propoſed by his Right Honourable Friend.

Mr. Jenkinson declared, that it was beneath the dignity of this government to treat with an Aſſembly, whoſe councils were governed ſometimes by the overweening influence of one band of aſſaſſins, and ſometimes of another.

Mr. Adam ſaid, that the queſtion was plain, and the motion appeared to him to be in every reſpect

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ſuch as the Houſe ought to adopt as a firſt and proper criterion by which the public ſhould judge of the preſent war, and of the conſequences that were likely to follow.

Mr. Jekyll, Major Maitland, and Mr. Lambton ſpoke in favour of the motion; Mr. Dent, Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Powys, Sir Richard Hill, Sir Francis Baſſet, Sir George Cornwall, and Sir Henry Norton, againſt it.

Mr. Fox roſe to reply. There had been, for ſome time, a great clamour for the queſtion which was now violently renewed: He ſaid, as he was determined to ſtate what he had to ſay, the ſooner Gentlemen choſe to continue the noiſe, the more of their time would be conſumed. He began with adverting to what had fallen from Mr. Powys: That Hon. Gentleman, who had lately choſen to diſtinguiſh himſelf by very particular attacks upon him, had ſtiled him an advocate for France. If he meant an advocate for what was juſt and right, ſo far he would allow himſelf to come under the deſcription. But if he meant that he entered into the partialities and intereſts of an advocate, he begged to diſclaim the character. The phraſe was ambiguous, and the Honourable Gentleman, in applying it, knew, and perhaps intended that it ſhould be taken up by the public in the moſt invidious point of view. That Hon. Gentleman had ſaid, that he rejoiced that to-night the ſenſe of the Houſe was decidedly to be taken. If any thing

could deter him from taking, as he propoſed, the ſenſe of the Houſe, it was this mode of invitation, which was neither decent nor Parliamentary. The right which had lately been inſiſted upon of a majority to know who were thoſe who oppoſed them, was inconſiſtent with the uſage and privileges of Parliament. He next adverted to what a Right Hon. Gentleman, Mr. Burke had alledged, that, according to his mode of reaſoning, every thing which had happened in France was juſt; and every thing done in oppoſition to them otherwiſe; becauſe he had ſaid, that the French were juſtifiable in declaring war againſt the Emperor of Germany, who had diſcovered hoſtile intentions towards them, he was therefore ſuppoſed to approve of all their proceedings in Brabant. Was this a fair concluſion? That Right Hon. Gentleman had likewiſe ſtated, that he had adopted new principles of reaſoning. It was new to ſtate arguments againſt the country. The arguments which he had ſtated were directed againſt the Miniſtry. And was it to be underſtood, that whenever Miniſters were blamed, the country was cenſured? Were we, from our deteſtation of French Republicaniſm come to that pitch of treple-refined deſpotiſm, that, to arraign the conduct of Miniſtry was to be repreſented as an attack upon the country? In that caſe, it would be better at once to ſhut the doors of that Houſe, and diſpenſe with the *form* of deliberating when its *ſubſtance* was deſtroyed. It would be better, when a war was declared, to give up at once

once all the free part of the Conſtitution, and to leave every thing to the abſolute and arbitrary deciſion of Miniſters. But, had the Right Honourable Gentleman always acted upon the principle which he now wiſhed to eſtabliſh? Had he not, in 1778, thought proper to arraign the conduct of Miniſtry while the country was engaged in a war? There was another point on which he wiſhed to touch. Miniſters, whom, on the preſent occaſion, the Right Hon. Gentleman thought proper to ſupport, had conceived it proper to make attempts to treat with the French. Why then ſhould they eſcape the Right Hon. Gentleman's cenſure, while he imputed as ſo great a crime to oppoſition the very wiſh to treat with that nation? Poland, it had been ſaid, was a more remote object; but what ſort of political morality was that which repreſented an object as leſs intereſting, in proportion as it was more remote? Were all the charges of horror to be heaped upon the French, with a view of exciting indignation againſt them? And was the conduct of the Court of Berlin, which was ſtill worſe, to be paſſed entirely by? Were we to deal out our invectives in ſo large a proportion againſt the French, while, with reſpect to the Court of Berlin, we abſtained from the ſmalleſt degree of cenſure. In that caſe, political morality, which had never been rated high in the opinions of men, would ſink very low indeed. He conſidered high rank or ſituation ſo far from being an extenuation, as affording an aggravation of the of-

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fence. Much had been ſaid about treating with the preſent Executive Council of France; he would only remark, that in every country you muſt treat with thoſe who have a power, unleſs you are bent on views of extirpation. Much likewiſe had been ſaid of the influence of France; Was the influence of France ſo formidable, and was the influence of Auſtria and Pruſſia nothing?—an influence which had been this evening ſtated to have completely ſhut us out from the Republic of Europe, and to have depriyed us of the means of ſaving Poland, however much we might have been inclined. An Honourable Gentleman had ſtated his motion to be inſidious, and the reaſon which he had aſſigned was, that it partly aſſumed what had not been admitted in that Houſe, and particularly miſ-ſtated what had; he would inform that Honourable Gentleman that his motion had not the ſmalleſt connexion with any thing that had been ſtated in that Houſe, nor even could admit of the moſt diſtant alluſion. If had been aſked how his motion could have any tendency to bring about a peace? An Hon. Gentleman on the other ſide of the Houſe had with the candour of youth, admitted that nothing could more directly lead to peace than a preciſe ground being ſtated for the war. If the nature of the reparation which we deſired was ſpecified, the object was then preciſe, and, when it was obtained, war was at an end. But if his motion was not adopted, and if Gentlemen went away with a doubt of the object which

was

was aimed at by the war, it could not then be known to what length, or, under what pretences the war might be protracted. In the courſe of this night's diſcuſſion, one of theſe was, that the conduct of the Court of Berlin with reſpect to Poland had not been attempted to be vindicated. If Briſſot was to be the object of ſo much invective, was the Court of Berlin to be exempted from cenſure; The more elevated the ſituation from which crimes proceeded, the more were they to be reprobated, the more pernicious was their example, and the more extenſive that miſchief with which they were attended. That a high ſituation ſhould procure oblivion or impunity for crimes, was a maxim which no juſt, generous, or magnanimous mind would readily admit. He was not acquainted with M. Briſſot, whom an Honourable Gentleman had ſtiled the Prince of Pick-pockets, but he always underſtood that any objections ſtated to his character, aroſe only from his public conduct. With reſpect to Monſ. Chauvelin, he would likewiſe ſuggeſt to that Right Honourable Gentleman to be very cautious in admitting accounts, as ground for his invective, which came from perſons heated with the moſt violent invectives and political animoſity. He had now finiſhed his taſk *liberavi animum meum*. He had done all that he could do. He had been told that the part he had taken was not popular. No man was more deſirous of popularity than he was; and no man would make leſs ſacrifices to obtain it. If the part which regard to the intereſts

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of the country obliged them to take, was not popular, it was not their duty to be influenced by that conſideration. We had now got into a war; and how beſt to put an end to that war was the object which now demanded their attention. It was their buſineſs, treading the old conſtitutional ground, to come forward boldly with their opinions, in proportion to the importance of the criſis, and the danger of the country, and not to be deterred by the ſuggeſtions of timidity, the menace of unpopularity. It likewiſe gave him ſatisfaction that they had not ventured to come forward to give a negative to his Motion, even amidſt the general exultation which prevailed among the Members of that Houſe with reſpect to a war. He feared, he by no means wiſhed, that this exultation in its event would have a termination ſimilar to that which had been ſo emphatically deſcribed by the Roman Hiſtorian, Tacitus, "*Spe laeta, tractatu dura eventuit iſtia.*"

Mr. Wyndham, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Smith, diſapproved of the war.

Mr Burke explained.

The Houſe divided, when there appeared,

For the previous queſtion	—	270
Againſt it	—	44
Majority againſt Mr. Fox's Motion		226

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At half paſt Two' o'Clock the Houſe adjourned.

FINIS.